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20 YEARS!
1987-2007
CKN
Booster Gold

Going for the Gold

While he may be a hero from the far future, but for a while Booster Gold's more *immediate* future seemed quite limited. However, as the events of **52** revealed, even an apparent demise couldn't stop Booster from returning —first in the final issues of **52**, and next in a new series written by *Geoff Johns & Jeff Katz* with art by the character's creator, *Dan Jurgens.*

Jurgens is the first to admit that, until recently, he never imagined that Booster would return to such a prominent role in the DCU. "But when you think about who he is and where he came from, along with using Rip Hunter's time machine in the first place, it's a tremendously logical progression," Jurgens said. "Geoff and Jeff are keying on that, along with his basic character attributes and flaws."

It was *Geoff Johns* who played a vital role in the launch of ***All New Booster Gold.*** "I've liked Booster Gold since I read his series back in the '80s. He was a great character, and one of the ones I really gravitated towards when I was first reading comic books, and in **52**, I just *loved* writing him," Johns said. "He's a really unique character who's been through a ton of stuff. He continued being one of my favorite characters, even when everyone was calling him out and thinking that he was a big jerk, when he's actually the greatest hero in **52** at the end of the day. Actually, by far, he's the greatest hero at the end of **52**.

"I just loved the idea that this guy, who had a reputation that he was desperate to overcome, but through circumstances—a little like the Thing over at Marvel, through circumstances and his own fault—he always ended up looking like a jerk, or doing something heroic when nobody was around to see it. So I started getting more and more ideas about him as a character and where he would go after **52**, and what his role in the DC Universe would be, and I really wanted to explore that.

"That was where Jeff came into the picture. We started throwing ideas back and forth, and after a little bit, it just made sense that we do this together. We spitballed from there on what we would like to see in a ***Booster Gold*** book, and how we could make him different from the rest of the characters in the DC Universe, and how could we also keep everything that made Booster such a great character in the beginning, and also progressed him into his next evolution within the DC Universe—and that last part is why Dan's on board as well."

Jurgens was glad to be involved with the ***Booster Gold*** relaunch—although he was a bit surprised when he heard that his creation would star in a new solo series. "*Mike Siglain*, who's editing the book, gave me a call and asked if I was interested. We kicked it around for a while and upon reading the series proposal immediately became hooked. It's going to have a really unique mix of high adventure, humor, human fallibility and drama. Along with all of that, it's going to be an integral part of defining the DCU."

Both Katz and Johns were thrilled to be working with veteran creator Jurgens. "Dan's going to absolutely *hate* hearing this, but I've got to say it anyway," Katz said. "I've practically grown up reading his work…"

"I got into comics late, compared to some people my age," Johns added, "but when I was getting into them in the mid to late '80s…Dan, I hate to say it too, but you were *the guy*. Half the books I bought back then, you had something to do with them!"

The new series will elevate the character from superhero comic relief to a pivotal role as a sort of protector of the time stream. How'd he land such an important role, and is he comfortable with it? "I don't know if Booster is ever the type to be 100% comfortable with *anything*," Jurgens said. "Booster often gets a few curve balls thrown his way, often because he inadvertently sets it up to happen.

"As to how he got the job... He falls into it through Rip Hunter, who is sort of a guide and moral compass of sorts. As we all know, Booster needs that from time to time. But because Booster is from the future, he's uniquely suited to the job."

What's Johns' take on Booster's personality? "I always go back to comparisons to the Thing," Johns said. "The interesting thing with him is that Ben Grimm always has this stroke of bad luck at the worst time, and he gives into it a little bit. Booster's a little bit the opposite—he tries to make the best out of bad situations, and he will end up being his own worst enemy at times. At least he used to be."

"Geoff and I made the analogy that in some ways, Booster is like that guy who's just out of college for a year or two, and is finally getting his feet on the ground and realizing what real life is and is ready to step up and accept what responsibility it, and is ready to take on life, only to realize that life isn't *quite* the way he expects it to be," Katz added.

"Exactly," Johns agreed. "Even though at this point in his life and career, he should be a member of the Justice League, and should have all the accolades, because he's starting to be as altruistic as he can, certain things that are in the series will prevent him from doing that."

Where does the series pick up, and what's the focus of the first story arc? "It's firmly entrenched in the DC Universe, as far as time-travel goes," Johns said. "We can go anywhere, and anywhen. And in a way, it's a link between **52** and ***Countdown***—but more than that, it's the journey of Booster Gold and too his next evolution."

"It's safe to say that this is a series that moves around *a lot*," Jurgens said. "The first issue's cover shows a variety of characters, implying a lot of settings and eras, all of which you'll see in the book."

DC's solicitation for ***All New Booster Gold #1*** mentions that Booster will be visiting some of "the greatest moments of the DCU that have happened and will happen." Does this afford the creator the opportunity to recreate some iconic moments in DC history? "Indeed it does, which should be a lot of fun for the readers," Jurgens said. "Because the ultimate question that comes from that might be, 'What will we *change*?'"

"One of our real missions with this series," Katz explained, "is to give Booster a niche and a role in the fabric of the DCU where even years down the line when big events hit, he's going to have a logical reason to be there. They've done such a great job of elevating him through the last couple of years, and putting him through this hell to the point now where everyone is hungry to see him step up…he's going to do that, but it's going to be in a way that will surprise some people and make the book fun.

"The first arc, '52 Pick-Up,' plays off the end of **52**, dealing with Booster playing with the major characters of the DC Universe, and pieces of their respective pasts. One thing about Booster Gold is that he knows their futures and their pasts, so when he meets up with Sinestro, for example, Sinestro says, 'Oh, you're from the future? You've heard of Sinestro, I'm sure.' Booster can only give an 'Oh yeah, we've heard of you.' So you get to play off all of this fun stuff, because you're with Booster Gold the whole time. The reader *is* Booster Gold, and that's going to be part of the fun."

"If you're a DC fan, it's a trip through a lot of fun areas and corners of the DC Universe," Katz added. In addition to Sinestro, readers can also look forward to appearances by Jonah Hex, Barbara 'Batgirl' Gordon, and Flash & Kid Flash, along with plenty of other guest stars from various periods in DC history.

Jurgens is confident that readers who've liked DC's recent revitalizations of their superhero universe are going to be pleased with ***All New Booster Gold.*** "The book has come together very nicely. Everyone involved is having a great time, and it promises to be one of the more unique books out there. Booster is far more human than most heroes. He'll stumble. He'll screw up. He's a guy who generally wants to do the right thing but is also mindful that realizing personal gain while doing so isn't necessarily a bad thing. All of that makes for a consistently entertaining read."

All New Booster Gold #1, a $2.99 comic, is scheduled for August 16th release.

by Matt Brady & Cliff Biggers

Courtesy your friendly neighborhood comics outlet!

Comic Shop Newsarama

Produced by Comic Shop News in cooperation with Matt Brady and newsarama.com

Good and Eva

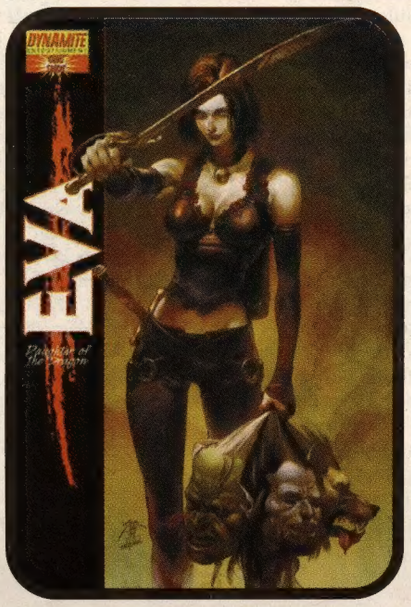
A couple of weeks ago, *CSN* told you about the post-***Marvel Zombies*** return of Ash in an ongoing ***Army of Darkness*** series from Dynamite Entertainment. It turns out that an acquaintance of his is also making a return at the same time...

Eva, Daughter of the Dragon, an August oneshot from Dynamite, stars the character who "was created with some help from ***Army of Darkness*** writer *James Kuhoric* as he used her in the ***Ash vs. Monsters*** story arc," publisher *Nick Barrucci* said. "We feel she has a lot of potential, so we're testing the waters by letting the fans see her in action in here own one-shot. From there, the Daughter of the Dragon may very well be back—after all, there's a lot of evil and vampires to slay in the comic book world~"

So just who is Eva? "She's Dracula's Daughter!," writer *Brandon Jerwa* said. "She's sexy, she's strong and she's *great* with a sharp object. She also ages slower than normal folks, so she's got youth on her side."

How's her relationship with dear old dad? "Strained," Jerwa said. "Dracula is actually interested in a conditional reconciliation, but Eva's having none of it. She truly loathes her father and will stop at nothing to see him disintegrating in the morning sun...dead forever with a stake in his cold heart...or at least stopped in his tracks by a fresh loaf of garlic bread.

"Okay, I shouldn't make jokes. This is a serious book. It's Eva vs. Dracula vs. an even greater, bloodier threat, with Frankenstein's monster, a few werewolves and even a surprise classic monster movie guest star all running around."



Will there be any ***Army of Darkness*** elements in this solo oneshot? "Sort of," Jerwa said. "It's not something I can totally explain right now, but this book allows for the events of ***AOD*** and the Dynamite / Top Cow crossover series ***Monster Wars***.. but it depends on neither for its story. This is a stand-alone piece that lets the monsters have a life of their own. We start in the past, prior to the ***AOD*** story and then move to the present day, *after* the events of ***AOD***. And yet, you don't have to have read ***AOD*** to understand it."

Should Eva graduate to her own ongoing series, will Jerwa be on hand to chronicle her adventures? "Oh, I'd love to! I have all sorts of ideas. In the immediate future, however, I understand that Eva will be meeting up with The Darkness in a crossover written by *Leah Moore & John Reppion*. If the young lady comes around to me again, I'll certainly be willing."

Zombies, vampires and their offspring, monsters galore--this is quite a renaissance for horror comics! Why is the genre stronger than ever now? "Monsters are *fun*. It's that simple!" Jerwa said.

There's a very base sort of pleasure in watching someone being terrorized by a monster—it calls up a primal urge that we all have, a desire for thrills. Working with the classic monsters is an extra-special treat for me, because it's something I've always wanted to do. They're called 'classics' for a reason, y'know—these are characters who are often the villains, but you find yourself rooting for them because you want them to deliver the goods. Hopefully, this book will give you a heroine to root for while you're secretly cheering on that big, bad bloodsucker she calls 'daddy.'"

Eva, Daughter of the Dragon, a $4.99 oneshot illustrated by *Edgar Salazar*, is slated for August release.

A Valiant Effort

A couple of weeks ago in the ***CSN Summer Preview,*** we told you about the return of Valiant—sort of—in the upcoming ***Harbinger*** hardcover collection, which includes unseen material. ***Comic Shop Newsarama's*** *Ryan McLelland* has more news about the book, and what it might mean for Valiant.

Harbinger: The Beginning is a 200 page deluxe hardcover book reprinting #s 0-7 of the original series, along with a brand new story written by Valiant veteran *Jim Shooter.*

Since there is no film or digital file for this material, Valiant Entertainment is carefully restoring the book "by scanning the printed page, stripping the old color from the books, reconstructing the inks, and applying digital color, Valiant VP *Chip Carter* said. "The process [which was developed by former Valiant colorists in conjunction with tech-savvy computer colorists] is time consuming and expensive, but it results in a very high quality product."

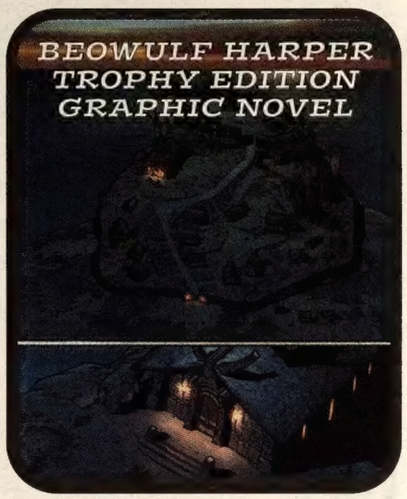
In addition to the reprinted stories, the book will include "an all-new 'Origin of Harada' story by *Jim Shooter & Bob Hall* featuring the first appearance of a new key Valiant character," Carter said. "In addition, digitally colored versions of the original Harbinger coupons by *Jim Shooter* that served as the inspiration for the new "Origin of Harada" story, (there are) two new covers, which include an all-new cover to the hardcover book and an all-new interior cover for the 'Origin of Harada' story."

Shooter told McLelland how it felt to return to characters with whom he was so closely associated after more than a decade's absence. "I think they are good characters and I like to see them having another chance at life," Shooter said. "I sort of had to wrap my mind around it again and I hadn't thought about (***Harbinger***) for so long. But I asked (the Valiant owners) to send me copies of most of the stuff, the first seven issues. They did, I read them, and as I always do when I'm reading I'm making edits in my head, doing a rewrite in my mind as I read it (laughs). Then I get into it. It took awhile, but I finally got back into the characters..."

Is it possible that this might be the first of many Valiant projects involving Shooter? "I don't know," Shooter said. "I did the new story as a favor for *Walter Black*, a very nice man—he's the Publisher for Valiant Entertainment... I did this as a favor to Walter because I like him."

And it appears that Shooter isn't the only Valiant veteran working for the reborn imprint. Former Valiant editor-in-chief *Bob Layton* has also said on his blog that "I've already done two big assignments for them and…sigh…you guessed it—sworn to secrecy."

Harbinger: The Beginning is slated for late August release.



CSNsider

- That Beowulf's a busy boy!... The epic hero is also featured in the all-ages-friendly ***Beowulf Harper Trophy Edition Graphic Novel*** by *Stefan Petrucha & Kody Chamberlain*. Same Beowulf, same Grendel, same Hrothgar, same Herot, but a totally different adaptation from Harper Collins.
- The epic Anglo-Saxon hero is coming to film later this year courtesy of *Robert Zemeckis* and screenwriters *Neil Gaiman & Roger Avary*—and it'll also appear in comics form from IDW, adapted by

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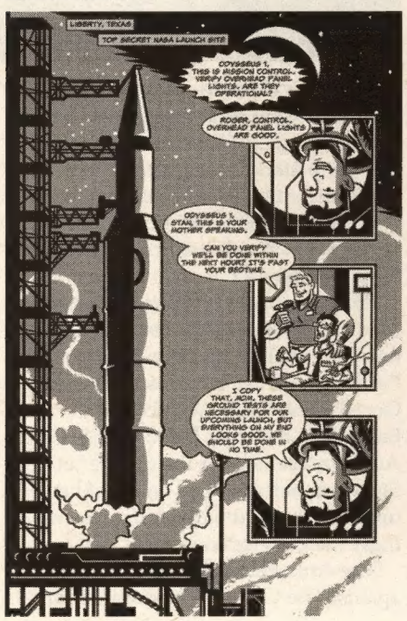
Chris Ryall, Gabriel Rodriguez, & Jay Fotos. The story should be familiar to anyone who took a Brit Lit course: Grendel terrorizes Hrothgar's kingdom, Beowulf defeats monster, monster's mom seeks revenge, and Grendel takes on Mom. "I've read Beowulf enough times and in enough different editions to know that this movie will be the ultimate telling of the tale," writer *Chris Ryall* said. Look for the weekly miniseries in October.

•Silent Devil's looking up, thanks to their new two-volume graphic novel series ***Astronaut Dad.*** Produced by writer *David Hopkins* and artist *Brent Schoonover*, ***Astronaut Dad*** follows three NASA families in Houston, Texas during the boom years of the space race. "This is one project I couldn't turn down," Silent Devil co-founder *Christian Beranek* said. "This series represents the future of the medium, being that original graphic novels are quickly becoming a widely embraced form of mass communication."


LIBERTY, TEXAS
TOP SECRET NASA LAUNCH SITE
ODYSSEUS 1, THIS IS MISSION CONTROL. VERIFY OVERHEAD PANEL LIGHTS. ARE THEY OPERATIONAL?
ROGER, CONTROL. OVERHEAD PANEL LIGHTS ARE GOOD.
ODYSSEUS 1, STAN, THIS IS YOUR MOTHER SPEAKING.
CAN YOU VERIFY WE'LL BE DONE WITHIN THE NEXT HOUR? IT'S PAST YOUR BEDTIME.
I COPY THAT, MOM. THESE GROUND TESTS ARE NECESSARY FOR OUR UPCOMING LAUNCH, BUT EVERYTHING ON MY END LOOKS GOOD. WE SHOULD BE DONE IN NO TIME.

"I write about families in crisis," Hopkins said. "***Astronaut Dad*** is my most personal work and, by far, the most challenging. It's gone through numerous re-writes. But now, I look at the script, I'm confident readers will get something truly honest and unique."

Astronaut Dad Volume One is slated for October release, with ***Volume Two*** following in the summer of 2008.

•Dark Horse has big plans for the 25th Anniversary of *Dean Motter's* ***Mister X*** next year (can it *really* be the 25th Anniversary?) Look for new comics, collected editions, figures, statues, and more, all supervised by Motter himself.

•Moonstone is resurrecting that 1960s action-figure-who-could-be-almost-any-other-hero ***Captain Action*** in a pair of backup stories that will lead to an original series (all written by ace storyteller *Fabian Nicieza).* Problem is, they don't have an artist. So if you think you were born to illustrate ***Captain Action,*** now's your chance: create two consecutive pages of non-colored sequential art, scan 'em at 300 DPI, and e-mail 'em to **contact_us@moonstonebooks.com** . Who knows—if you've got the right stuff, we may be listing your name in an upcoming ***CSNsider!***

•DC seems to be very serious about the manga market: they've invested in a new Japanese publishing venture, Flex Comix, which will create manga for print, the Internet, and mobile phones. DC's investment will be managed by DC Comics Japan, which was established earlier this year—and presumably, we'll see the material in the US via DC's CMX imprint.

•War may be hell, but it's great for sales! Marvel is having to go back to press for second printings of ***Incredible Hulk #107, Heroes for Hire #11,*** and ***Ghost Rider #12*** (all of which are ***World War Hulk*** tie-ins); they should be on the shelves in a couple of weeks.

•Other Marvel sellouts include ***Nova #3, New Warriors #1,*** and ***Loners #3...*** but Marvel has no plans to go back to press on these, so track down first printings while you can!

•*Roy Thomas & Gil Kane's* ***Ring of the Nibelung,*** a 200-page adaptation of *Richard Wagner's* Teutonic-legend-inspired opera originally published by DC, is coming back into print this fall in a full-color trade paperback from ExPress Publishing. Heroic fantasy fans take note: *Gil Kane* is in top form with this book, which is adapted by the master ***Conan*** writer himself!

•Want to acquire a complete ***Tintin*** collection in one fell swoop? It can't get easier than this! All twenty-four of *Hergé's* stories of Tintin and Snowy are collected in eight volumes in the ***Tintin Hardcover Boxed Set*** from Little Brown & Co. That's right—twenty-four TinTin in eight! Look for it this fall.

•Only a couple of years late: Avatar Comics is at long last releasing the third and fourth issues of *Warren Ellis's* ultra-offensive ***The Unfunnies.*** Warning: this really is Ellis at his most foul and objectionable, so stay away if you're squeamish or easily offended!

•*Mike W. Barr* offers a critical appreciation of DC's wonderful science fiction series of the 1950s and 1960s in TwoMorrows' September release ***The Silver Age Sci-Fi Companion.*** The classic work of *Gardner Fox, John Broome,* and others—produced for such *Julius Schwartz*-edited series as ***Strange Adventures, Mystery in Space,*** and ***Tales of the Unexpected***—is explored in this book that includes story-by-story reviews of complete series such as Adam Strange, Atomic Knights, Space Museum, Star Rovers, Star Hawkins and others, enhanced with rare art by *Carmine Infantino, Murphy Anderson, Gil Kane, Sid Greene, Mike Sekowsky,* and others.

Coming Comics—Marvel in September

The long-awaited and sure-to-be-controversial "One More Day" by *J. Michael Straczynski & Joe Quesada* kicks off in ***Amazing Spider-Man #544,*** then continues into ***Friendly Neighborhood Spider-Man #24*** before wrapping up in October's ***Sensational Spider-Man*** and ***Amazing Spider-Man.*** Peter's about to face the most devastating loss of his career... and he's going to have to answer the question, "What would you do if you had only one more day?" The choices he makes will startle readers and shake up Spider-Man continuity in unprecedented ways. Each issue of this four-part series—the final Spidey arc by JMS—will feature an expanded page-count to make room for director's-cut-style extras.

STILL ONLY 3.99!
24 OCT
FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD SPIDER-MAN
ATTENTION TRUE BELIEVER! IF YOU SHOULD READ BUT ONE COMIC THIS DECADE, THIS ONE'S IT!
ONE MORE DAY
MARVEL COMICS
WHY HAS DOCTOR STRANGE DARED SUMMON THE HEINOUS HANDS OF DEATH?
WHO ARE THE NECROPHAGOUS NIGHTSTALKERS?
AND WHILE YOU TRY TO FIGURE ALL OF THAT OUT DEAR MARVELITE, REMEMBER THAT...
A LIFE HANGS IN THE BALANCE!
SO, FLIP OPEN THIS COVER, ONLY IF YOU DARE!
(HEY, YOU GONNA BUY THIS THING? THIS AIN'T NO LIBRARY!)
FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD SPIDER-MAN #24
MARVEL

After a two-month miniseries break, ***Anita Blake, Vampire Hunter: Guilty Pleasures*** returns with the seventh installment of the twelve-part adaptation of *Laurell K. Hamilton's* best-selling novel. The second half of the maxiseries is scripted by *Jess Ruffner,* but artist *Brett Booth* remains on board for the entire saga.

Rambo creator and best-selling author *David Morrell* pays a visit to the Marvelverse to write ***Captain America: The Chosen,*** a six-parter illustrated by *Mitch Breitweiser.* The story, set outside of current continuity in the modern-day Middle East, explores the inspirational meaning of the Star-Spangled Avenger.

The Winter Soldier takes on virtually *everyone* in ***Captain America #30,*** the conclusion to the first arc of the "*Death of Captain America*" storyline, courtesy of *Ed Brubaker, Steve Epting, & Mike Perkins.*

Reed and Sue team up with the New FF in *Dwayne McDuffie & Paul Pelletier's* ***Fantastic Four #550*** to find the source of the disease wracking the fabric of spacetime itself. Only one being can follow such an ineffable trail—but a resentful Silver Surfer is in no mood to offer any assistance.

Franklin Richards finds adventure in the corners of his father's lab in ***Franklin Richards: Monster Mash,*** another all-ages collection of five misadventures of the youngest member of the FF family, brought to you by *Marc Sumerak & Chris Eliopoulos.*

Ed Brubaker, Matt Fraction, Dan Brereton, & Howard Chaykin explore the enigma of the Golden Age Iron Fist, Orson Randall, in ***Immortal Iron Fist Annual #1.*** If Danny Rand hopes to unlock the last mysteries of the Iron Fist, he'll have to track down Orson's long-lost life story and learn his secrets before it's too late.

Will Amadeus Cho quit thinking of the Hulk as a hero once he discovers what lurks beneath Madison Square Garden? Find out in ***Incredible Hulk #110*** by *Greg Pak & Carlo Pagulayan.*

You'd think there was a movie in the works or something... ***Iron Man: Enter the Mandarin*** presents a flashback to the early days of the Marvel Universe and the first meeting of Iron Man and his Asian adversary, courtesy of *Joe Casey & Eric Canete.*

Marvel resurrects its long-running anthology series ***Marvel Comics Presents*** in a larger forty-eight-page format, which allows for four stories in every comic. The first "something old, something new" issue features the introduction of Damien Cross; a Spider-Man space adventure; Hellcat versus Hellcat; and the premiere of the System.

Marvel explores its monstrous corners in ***Marvel Zombies: The Book of Angels, Demons, & Various Monstrosities,*** a handbook that explores all sorts of horrifying denizens of the Marvelverse.

Wolverine takes on the Hood in *Brian Bendis & Leinil Francis Yu's* ***New Avengers #34...*** but the faceoff that'll have everyone talking is Luke Cage versus Jessica Jones!

Mutants are now an endangered species, and the New X-Men realize that they may well be the *last* X-Men! After the events of "Quest for Magik," several of the kids have been changed forever, and the X-Men are finally taking some time to get to know their students. But after everything the team has been through... who even wants to *be* an X-Man? The answers to that question can be found in ***New X-Men #42*** by *Christopher Yost, Craig Kyle, & Skottie Young.*

Marvel's magical event ***Mystic Arcana*** continues with ***Sister Grimm,*** which features a *C.B. Cebulski-Phil Noto* story starring the Runaway's magic-wielder.

Why is Ms. Marvel taking on Tigra and other female heroes? *Brian Reed & Aaron Lopresti* answer that question in ***Ms. Marvel #19.***

The New Warriors are trying to help the Initiative in their battle with the all-new Zodiac... but little do they know that Tony Stark is weighing government requests that he take a harder stance regarding the New Warriors' flaunting of the rules. Watch it all come down in ***New Warriors #4.***

From the pages of ***Civil War: Front Line*** and ***Thunderbolts*** comes the former Speedball in his own limited series, ***Penance,*** by *Paul Jenkins & Paul Gulacy.* Once he was a hero, now Robbie Baldwin is the most hated man in America, blamed for the disaster at Stamford, tortured by visions of his failure and obsessed with strange, seemingly meaningless numbers.

The Armored Avenger squares off against The God of Thunder in ***Thor #3***

by *J. Michael Straczynski & Olivier Coipel.* Tony Stark, the new Director of S.H.I.E.L.D., comes to Oklahoma to verify the rumors that his old friend and teammate is alive and in town…but the God of Thunder wants to have a few words with the man who cloned him…

Is it possible to go too far in a story in which one green-skinned powerhouse threatens to destroy the world? Apparently so, since "going too far" is the key descriptor of *Greg Pak & John Romita Jr.'s* ***World War Hulk #4.*** The Incredible Hulk and his Warbound companions? They go too far! Dr. Strange? He goes *way* too far! Iron Man and Mr. Fantastic? They learn the precise definition of "too far" as the Hulk delivers his final judgment from his stone throne in the Great Arena!

Norman Osborn has escaped... and that means that any person Peter Parker loves could be in danger. But Norman Osborn isn't the only Spider-enemy on the loose: Electro is also targeting Spider-Man for elimination! Witness Spidey's dilemma in ***Ultimate Spider-Man #s 113 & 114*** by *Brian Bendis & Stuart Immonen,* both slated for September release.

Marc Guggenheim returns to write Logan's exploits with ***Wolverine #57,*** joining artist *Scott Kolins* for a tale ominously entitled "The Death of Logan."

Havok's spacefaring adventures post-"Shi'Ar Empire" continue in ***X-Men: Emperor Vulcan,*** a five-part limited series by *Christopher Yost & Paco Diaz.* Vulcan is the Shi'Ar Emperor and Havok is leading the rebellious Starjammers. But who is really right and who is really wrong?

Marvel brings several long-out-of-print collected editions back to comic shops this summer, including ***Marvel Masterworks: Fantastic Four Volume Five,*** reprinting ***FF #s 41-50*** (offered in both the standard and the variant edition); ***Amazing Spider-Man Omnibus Volume One,*** reprinting the entire *Steve Ditko* Spidey run; ***Fantastic Four Omnibus Volume One,*** reprinting the first thirty issues of ***FF*** by *Stan Lee & Jack Kirby;* and ***Uncanny X-Men Omnibus Volume One,*** collecting ***Uncanny #s 94-131, Giant-Size X-Men #1, & Annual #3*** by *Chris Claremont, Len Wein, John Byrne, Dave Cockrum,* and others.

Marvel's initial-release collected editions for September include:

•***Avengers/Defenders War,*** a hardcover collecting ***Avengers #s 115-118*** and ***Defenders #s 8-11;***

•***Captain America by Ed Brubaker Omnibus Volume One,*** a 700+ page hardcover compilation of ***Captain America #s 1-25, Captain America 65th Anniversary Special,*** and ***Winter Soldier: Winter Kills;***

•***Captain America: Red, White, & Blue,*** a softcover collection of the all-star anthology that adds the backup stories from ***Captain America #50*** and ***Marvel Spotlight: Captain America Remembered;***

•***Daredevil: Hell to Pay Volume One,*** collecting ***Daredevil #s 94-99;***

•***Earth X Companion,*** collecting ***Earth X #1/2, Nighthawk #s 1-3,*** and more than a hundred pages of background and sketch material;

•***Essential Punisher Volume Two,*** collecting ***Punisher #s 1-20 & Annual #1,*** along with ***Daredevil #257;***

•***Ghost Rider: Trail of Tears,*** a hardcover collecting the six-part *Garth Ennis-Clayton Crain* miniseries;

•***Iron Man: Hypervelocity,*** collecting the six-part miniseries;

•***Loki,*** a softcover edition of the painted miniseries;

•***Marvel Adventures Spider-Man Volume Seven: Secret Identity,*** a digest collecting ***Marvel Adventures Spidey #s 25-28;***

•***Marvel Masterworks: Nick Fury, Agent of SHIELD Volume One,*** collecting ***FF #21*** (the first modern-day Nick Fury story), ***Strange Tales #s 135-153*** (featuring the earliest Marvel work by *Jim Steranko*), & ***Tales of Suspense #78;***

•***Marvel Zombies Vs. Army of Darkness,*** a hardcover collection of the five-part crossover series;

•***Ms. Marvel Volume Two: Civil War,*** collecting ***Ms. Marvel #s 6-10 & Ms. Marvel Special;***

•***Punisher Max Volume Eight: Widowmaker,*** collecting ***Punisher #s 43-49;***

•***Punisher Presents: Barracuda Max,*** collecting the *Garth Ennis* miniseries;
•***Punisher War Journal Volume One: Civil War,*** collecting ***Punisher War Journal #s 1-4*** as well as the black and white version of #1;
•***Silent War,*** collecting the six-issue miniseries;
•***Spider-Man Family: Back in Black Digest,*** collecting ***Spider-Man Family #s 1-3;***
•***Thunderbolts by Warren Ellis Volume One: Faith in Monsters,*** a hardcover compilation of ***Thunderbolts #s 110-115*** and ***Desperate Measures,*** as well as the Thunderbolts stories from ***Civil War: The Initiative*** and ***Choosing Sides;***
•***Ultimate Spider-Man Volume 18: Ultimate Knights,*** collecting the final *Mark Bagley*-illustrated tales from ***USM #s 106-111;***
•***Wolverine: Origins Volume Two—Savior,*** collecting ***Wolverine: Origins #s 6-10;***
•***Wolverine Classic Volume Five,*** collecting the 1990's ***Wolverine #s 24-30;*** and
•***White Tiger: A Hero's Compulsion,*** collecting the six-issue limited series.

Coming Comics—Image in September

Sculptor *Dave Cortes* and painted *Eddie Wires* bring their skills to play on Top Cow's ***Darkness 15" Polystone Statue,*** which captures Jackie Estacado as he begins his transformation from deadly mafia hitman to the unstoppable bearer of The Darkness!

The Zorro motif is updated in ***Johnny Delgado Is Dead*** by *John Leekley & Michael D. Olmos.* The story focuses on a US district attorney caught in a drug ring on both sides of the US/Mexico border. Betrayed, Johnny calls upon his childhood friend Victor Reyes, now a special forces commando, to assist him is his struggle for survival and justice.

Jerry Frissen, Bill, Witko, & Tanquerelle explore the world of Mexican wrestlers in ***Lucha Libre,*** an anthology book based on the successful toy line.

Bryan J.L. Glass & Michael Avon Oeming present an epic fantasy with anthropomorphic rodents in ***The Mice Templar #1.*** Don't think ***Mouse Guard*** or Mickey, however; this tale combines the grand fantasy elements of Tolkien with the fable tradition of animals as central figures. (See ***CSN #1042*** for more on this series.)

Michael Cavallaro takes readers to post-WWI Italy in ***Parade (with Fireworks),*** a two-issue limited series in which a young man is caught between a rowdy group of local Fascist Party members and his family. And the choice he's about to make will change his life forever!

Top Cow's ***Pilot Season*** continues with the debut of two more first issues: ***Velocity,*** featuring *Joe Casey & Kevin Maguire's* take on Cyberforce's resident speedster; and ***Cyblade,*** starring the superspy and assassin in an origin tale by *Joshua Hale Fialkov & Rick Mays.*

Arthur Claire & Aleksi Briclot further expand on *Todd McFarlane's* most famous creation in ***Spawn: Architects of Fear,*** a tale that unites Al Simmons with one of the five Angels of the dreaded caste of the Architects, who needs the Hellspawn's help to regain of one of their most powerful weapons that is now out of control.

When two jaded teenagers are visited by imaginary childhood friends who have come to warn them that something big is about to happen, life is turned upside down... and while that certainly shakes up their world, it's not always a good thing! See what happens in *Jamie McKelvie's* ***Suburban Glamour,*** a four-part miniseries.

The cast of *Robert Kirkman's* acclaimed zombie series is featured on the ***Walking Dead Poster,*** featuring art by series illustrators *Charlie Adlard & Cliff Rathburn.*

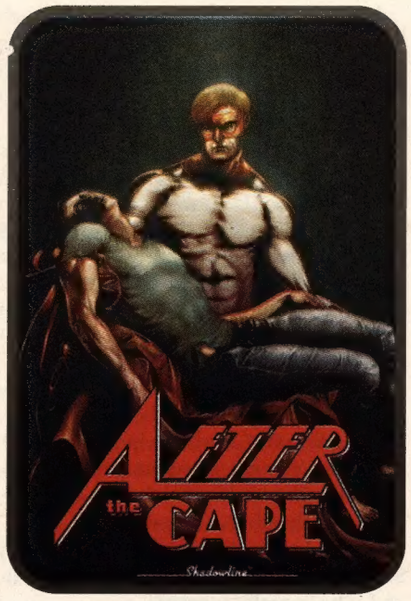


Image collected editions include:
•***After the Cape Volume One: How Far to Fall,*** collecting the miniseries;
•***Blood Nation,*** collecting the vampiric sf tale by *Rob Moran, James Devlin, & John Keane;*
•***Freshmen Volume Two: Fundamentals of Fear,*** collecting the second miniseries, which is supplemented with behind-the-scenes material and a cover gallery;
•***Madman & the Atomics Volume One,*** offering 184 pages of *Mike Allred* zaniness;
•***The Nightly News,*** compiling *Jonathan Hickman's* miniseries; and
•***The Walking Dead Volume Seven: The Calm Before,*** reprinting ***The Walking Dead #s 37-42.***

CSNsights

Reviews by Cliff Biggers

New Avengers #31

Brian Bendis (W); Leinil Francis Yu (A)
(Marvel, $2.99)

The Skrulls are among us, and their presence lays the groundwork for a Body-Snatchers-esque bout of paranoia-fired storytelling as heroes wonder just who's the real deal and who's a green-skinner doppelganger. Unfortunately, what should have been a very powerful final page involving Luke, Jessica, and family is marred by ineffective visual storytelling that fails to communicate what *Brian Bendis* has subsequently told readers that he intended the page to convey. Even so, it looks like "don't trust your neighbor" will become the order of the day in the Marvelverse, which is becoming less and less a place any of us would want to live in—but a great catalyst for a promising story!
Grade: B

Strangers in Paradise #90

Terry Moore (W/A)
(Abstract, $2.99)

Someone send ***Sopranos*** creator *David Chase* a copy of this comic book to show him the *right* way to end a popular series. Moore wraps up his compelling human interest saga with a powerful and poignant issue that ties up the loose ends, gives the readers the closure they desire, and in its final page puts the entire run in an intriguing perspective. Better still, this issue leave an opening for Moore to return to the story of Katchoo, Francine, and family should he ever want to (and let's hope that, at some point, he decides to do just that!).
Grade: A+

Silver Surfer: Requiem #1

J. Michael Straczynski (W); Esad Ribic (A)
(Marvel, $2.99)

Some writers get the Surfer; some don't, as his short-lived series from a few years ago demonstrated. The good news, though, is that JMS *really* gets the Surfer, delivering the character's best story in decades. Ribic's art carries the story perfectly, capturing both the cosmic majesty and the introspective appeal of Marvel's most humanly alien character.
Grade: A

Kiss 4K #1

Ricky Sprague (W); Daniel Compos & Kevin Crossley (A)
(Image, $3.99)

Ample proof that music and comics don't blend, as a rule. If anything, this series is even murkier and more uninspired that the *prior* run of Kiss comics, blending pretentiousness and unfocused storytelling with stereotyped characterization and lackluster art. Of course, Kiss

diehards are going to have to have it regardless... (If you think that size might make a difference, there's also a massive poster-sized version of the comic that carries a much higher pricetag—but in this case, bigger is no better.)
Grade: D

Jack Kirby's Fourth World Omnibus Volume One

Jack Kirby (W); Jack Kirby & Vince Colletta (A)
(DC, $49.99)

Readers who thought that *Grant Morrison's* ***Seven Soldiers*** event was the first comics experiment in interwoven multi-title interlocking storytelling will be pleasantly surprised with this book, which reprints the first half-year-plus of *Jack Kirby's* amazing Fourth World saga in chronological order. Now today's readers can re-experience this far-reaching storyline the same way we veterans did back in the early 1970s, seeing story elements introduced in one book play a major role in another in an unprecedented way. This otherwise-perfect presentation package of Kirby's seminal DC saga could have been improved by slightly heavier paper—but not everyone agrees with that, judging from the conversations I've had with others who find the lighter-weight uncoated stock more reminiscent of the original comics presentation.
Grade: A- (A+ for the material and restoration, B for the paper stock)

Thunderhead Underground Falls

Joel Orff (W/A)
(Alternative, $14.99)

Orff skillfully conveys mood in this story of a couple's last hoorah of freedom before the young man goes into the army, but what could have been a moving, introspective tale is hampered by self-absorbed characters and fragmented storytelling, which is made even more trying by an irregular, hasty lettering style. The best part of the book is Orff's heavy-lined art that is often reminiscent of old linoleum block prints, which give the book a distinctive and memorable look.
Grade - C

Satan's *#@%! Baby

Eric Powell (W/A)
(Dark Horse, $2.99)

If you've been trying to track down this one-printing-and-we're-done-with-it edition of ***Goon*** creator *Eric Powell's* vulgar, adolescent screed, don't bother: it's a comic full of sophomoric sounds and spiteful fury, but it signifies absolutely nothing. This is the comic book version of a child yelling dirty words for shock value, and little more. Perhaps not every story a comic book creator produces needs to see print... Dark Horse is wise in its decision not to include this in future ***Goon*** collections; it's a creative nadir that cheapens Powell's better work.
Grade: F

Justice League of America #s 8-10

Brad Meltzer (W); Ed Benes & Sandra Hope (A)

Justice Society of America #s 5 & 6

Geoff Johns (W); Dale Eaglesham & Art Thibert (A)
(DC, $2.99@)

DC resurrected (among other things) a fine old tradition with this story arc: the JLA/JSA crossover event. **[Spoiler Alert: skip to the next paragraph if you don't want to know the story's twist.]** The five part "Lightning Saga," explains a number of anomalies in the post-***Infinite Crisis*** DCU—but its primary purpose is to replace new Flash Bart Allen with an older, more established Flash. The elimination of Bart took place in ***The Flash—The Fastest Man Alive #13,*** which shipped the same day as the final installment of "The Lightning Saga." Alas, the lightning zigged when it should have zagged, and we now have the wrong Flash brought back from the void. That's right... still no Barry Allen. **[End Spoiler Alert.]**

In spite of this disappointing finale, "The Lightning Saga" feels like a Big Deal. Meltzer & Johns work together to answer some questions will raising others—and along the way, they re-introduce the *true* Legion of Super-Heroes, a team so instantly likeable that I hate to see them leave... and I hope that DC can find a way to fine a permanent home for them very soon.

The biggest drawback to this story is its opacity; readers unfamiliar with DC's enormous cast of characters might find themselves in dire need of a playbook to know who's who and why they matter—and there are times with a cast this large that the art doesn't adequately convey who's doing what and why it matters. I suspect that this storyline will send a number of readers to reference volumes or the 'net in a quest to identify the cast and learn their backstories.

"The Lightning Saga" offers a great opportunity for fans of one team to discover the other, although it's a bit too complicated to serve as a cold introduction to readers totally unfamiliar with either team.
Grade - B+

Grant Morrison: The Early Years

Timothy Callahan (W)
SequArt, $22.99)

I enjoy literary criticism—it's one of the things that led me to teach literature for a quarter century. But literary criticism is far less insightful and effective when it's colored by literary hero worship, which seems to be the case here.

When he dismisses criticism of the non-linearity of ***Arkham Asylum*** by identifying the elements that some object to, then saying that "all of these aspects make ***Arkham Asylum*** a more fully realized combination of words and images than almost any comic book story ever published," it becomes clear that there's an overweening admiration involved that so colors any criticism that the book never truly *criticizes* at all; instead, it analyzes and attempts to explain why Morrison is so great at what he does.

That doesn't render the book useless, since the analysis itself is still quite insightful, and the interview with Morrison at the end is a treat. If only Callahan could have toned down the grandiloquent praise; as powerful as the body of work is, every story isn't a gem, and an acknowledgment of some of Morrison's storytelling flaws in these early works would have helped give the book more balance.

Still, I'd rather have a flawed analysis than none at all...
Grade - B-

Killing Girl #1

Glen Brunswick (W); Frank Espinosa (A)
(Image, $2.99)

Frequency screenwriter *Glen Brunswick* teams with ***Rocketo's*** *Frank Espinosa* to tell the complex tale of a former prostitute reborn as one of the most efficient assassins in the Mafia's employ. Her aloof demeanor falls by the wayside, however, when one of her targets seems to know about her earlier life... including details involving her *real* family, long presumed dead.

Brunswick's story, sharp and focused, is reminiscent of ***Alias*** and ***La Femme Nikita***—only this time, the adept agent is on the wrong side of the law. Espinosa's art is far more minimal than Brunswick's story, however; his fluid figure work is quite capable, but his lack of backgrounds too often leaves figures isolated, hampering the flow of the story. Still, ***Killing Girl*** works, thanks to it strong concept.
Grade - B

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